

Tuesday, 9th February, 1926

**THE  
COUNCIL OF STATE DEBATES**

**(Official Report)**

**VOLUME VII**

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**FIRST SESSION**

**OF THE**

**SECOND COUNCIL OF STATE, 1926**



**DELHI  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS  
1926**

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# COUNCIL OF STATE.

*Tuesday, 9th February, 1926.*

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## INAUGURATION OF THE SECOND COUNCIL OF STATE.

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His Excellency the Viceroy with the President of the Council of State having arrived in procession, His Excellency took his seat on the dais.

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HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY: Gentlemen of the Council of State, I have summoned you to-day because I desire to welcome you at the beginning of the Session of your Chamber. The first Council of State concluded its labours in September last and dissolved. The body I see before me to-day has since come into being as a result of new elections and nominations and is about to begin in the present Session to exercise its important functions as a vital part of the constitutional machinery of the government of the country. In my address to the Members of the first Council of State at the close of their final Session, I dwelt upon the nature of those functions and expressed my appreciation of the conception of their duties which had been formed by the Members of the first Council of State and of the able manner in which those high responsibilities had been discharged in the interests of India. It is more particularly, in view of these considerations and in order to mark my regard for the important position of this Chamber in the constitutional structure and my esteem for the public services to the people and the administrations rendered by it in the past, that I desired to offer welcome and encouragement to those to whom it will now fall to carry on the traditions of this Chamber and to exercise the influence assigned to it by the constitution.

Among the Members I see the faces of a number of old acquaintances who were Members of the first Council of State. By their work in this Chamber they have already displayed the high qualities of their experience, sobriety of judgment, sense of duty and devotion to the best interests of India. I welcome them again to the Chamber. I also welcome those who are new Members. With some of the latter I have already formed personal acquaintance; and others are known to me by the record of their public work. I congratulate them on the wide field of interest and activity which their admission to this Chamber opens to them. I am confident that I can rely upon them in their actions to bear in mind the weighty responsibilities assigned to this Chamber in the constitution and ever to strive, after careful consideration and according to the dictates of their judgment, to arrive at those conclusions upon the difficult questions coming before them, which are best calculated to conduce to the greater happiness and progress of the people and to the maintenance of the highest standards of administration in India.

I do not propose to-day to enter upon a review of questions of general interest in India, as I have recently addressed the Legislative Assembly:

[H. E. the Viceroy.]

but I shall briefly allude to certain matters of special interest at the present time.

I greatly appreciated the action of the Members of the Legislative Assembly in regard to postponing the discussion of the Resolution upon the situation in South Africa. Debate at that moment might have prejudiced the delicate and critical negotiations in which I and my Government are engaged with the Government of the Union of South Africa. I can assure the Indian Legislature that in these negotiations we have taken and are taking every step which, to the best of our judgment, is calculated to help in arriving at a solution satisfactory to Indian opinion of this difficult problem. I have given anxious thought and my close personal attention to every step we have taken, and I gratefully acknowledge that the attitude of the Indian Legislature and the Standing Committee has been a strong support to me throughout these negotiations. I must ask the Legislature to have a little further patience notwithstanding the news from South Africa in this morning's press telegrams, and to continue to trust in our efforts. I wish it had been possible to explain the situation more fully to you, but I am sure that you will understand why I refrain from adding to the statements I made recently in addressing the Legislative Assembly.

I feel certain that this Chamber has been interested in the announcement of the decision to appoint a Royal Commission on Agriculture. This Chamber has always taken a lively interest in this subject. In July, 1923, the Honourable Sardar Jogendra Singh moved a Resolution for the appointment of a Committee by Government to consider questions, nearly all of which fall within the scope of the terms of reference of the Royal Commission now to be appointed. In February, 1924, the Honourable Mr Sethna advocated the appointment of a Committee to make a survey of the economic conditions of the people of India with special reference to the condition of the agricultural population; and on the 5th of March in the same year Sardar Jogendra Singh moved a Resolution advocating a further survey of irrigation possibilities. All these Resolutions had the same object in view, that is, an increase of agricultural productivity and the improvement of the economic conditions of the rural population. The first of the three motions was lost, but the two latter were adopted. In addressing the Legislature in September last, I laid stress on the importance attached by me and my Government to these representations. I then stated that I hoped to secure the general object in view by the operations of a Central Board. It appeared at the time that a general inquiry by a Committee or Commission might be open to some objections and might possibly hinder the projects of the Local Governments. A closer examination of the problem has, however, convinced us that the machinery of a Board would be inadequate to secure the far-reaching results for which we all hope. It appeared imperative, having in view the great importance of this subject to India as a whole and the large numbers of persons in India wholly dependent upon agricultural operations, to constitute a special body which might be calculated to bring to the task a wider store of experience, a more detached angle of view and a greater authority than we could hope to obtain from a Central Board. A body of this character, in our opinion, appeared to be in a better position to devise effective measures for the expansion and co-ordination of agricultural efforts in India and

to give real assistance, based on the fruits of the latest practical and scientific experience elsewhere, to the Ministers and Departments of the Local Governments to enable them to obtain the best results from their activities. It was in this conviction and after consultation with the Secretary of State and Local Governments that we finally framed our recommendations to the Secretary of State for the appointment of a Royal Commission. Let me once more make plain that our object is to expand and strengthen the operations of the Ministries of Agriculture of the Local Governments and to assist them with information and suggestions, which might not otherwise be available to them, for still further supplementing their achievements. It is not desired in any way to curtail their powers of initiative or action—quite the reverse. At the same time, care has been taken not to overload the inquiry by entrusting to it the examination into certain other important subjects connected with agriculture. These problems have technicalities of their own and vary in character in each Province. They already engage attention of the Local Governments and are in many cases the subject of legislative proposals in the Local Legislatures.

You will doubtless have observed that there has been criticism hinting at some dark political motive in the appointment of the Commission. It is unnecessary, I feel sure, for me to repudiate the suggestion. The improvement of the premier industry of this country and the advancement of the interests of the most numerous class in India appears to me, as I have no doubt it also appears to you, to be a purpose wholly beneficent in its scope and outside the sphere of political controversy. It has long been the subject of consideration by me and my Government and by the Legislature. I rejoice that it has been my good fortune to announce the decision during my term of office and that it will fall to the lot of my distinguished successor, who is specially qualified in this respect, to deal with the recommendations that will be made.

My Government have recently had under their consideration the adoption of a new policy regarding opium which is in accordance with the trend of opinion in a number of other countries and also with views that have been freely expressed in some quarters on different occasions in India. We have very carefully examined the new obligations undertaken by us under Article 1 of the Protocol to the Convention of the Second Opium Conference at Geneva, "to take such measures as may be required to prevent completely within five years from the present date the smuggling of opium from constituting a serious obstacle to the effective suppression of the use of prepared opium". As a result we have come to the conclusion that in order at once to fulfil our international obligations in the largest measure and to obviate the complications that may arise from the delicate and invidious task of attempting to sit in judgment on the internal policy of other Governments, it is desirable that we should declare publicly our intention to reduce progressively the exports of opium from India so as to extinguish them altogether within a definite period, except as regards exports of opium for strictly medical purposes. The period to be fixed has not yet been finally determined, as before arriving at a decision it is necessary to consult the Government of the United Provinces regarding the effects that the resulting reduction in the area cultivated with opium will have on the cultivators in that Province. We further propose to discontinue altogether the system of auction sales of opium in India as soon as the agreement for direct sale now being negotiated with the Government of French Indo-China is concluded. My



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Government hope at an early date to move a Resolution in both Chambers of the Legislature in order to give the Members of the Legislature an opportunity of expressing their views on these important proposals.

Since I last addressed the Legislative Assembly on the 20th of January, I have received an important communication from His Majesty's Government on a subject which I feel sure you will welcome. The question of taking the first steps towards the creation of an Indian Navy had been under the consideration of my Government for some time past. This was one of the tasks to which Lord Rawlinson devoted much of his energy and time before his lamented death. The inclination of my Government to take concrete measures was strengthened by the strong recommendation of the Mercantile Marine Committee to reorganise the Royal Indian Marine on the lines of a combatant naval service; and after a careful preliminary examination of the problems and a full consideration of the advice of several naval experts, my Government during last cold weather decided to invite a Committee, under the presidency of Lord Rawlinson with Vice-Admiral Richmond and Sir Bhupendra Nath Mitra as members, to formulate definite proposals. The report of this Committee will be published to-day. Their recommendations were accepted in general principle by my Government and forwarded to the Secretary of State for approval.

I am now in a position to make the following announcement as regards the decision of His Majesty's Government:—

"Subject to the necessary legislation being effected, it has been decided to reconstruct the Royal Indian Marine as a combatant force to enable India to enter upon the first stage of her naval development, and ultimately to undertake her own naval defence. Subject to the approval of His Majesty the King Emperor, the service will be known as the Royal Indian Navy and will fly the White Ensign. Its functions in peace time will be as defined in paragraph 3 of the Report of Lord Rawlinson's Committee. Its most important aspect in the early stages will be that of a training squadron. It will train the *personnel* for service in war. For this purpose it will become from the first a sea-going force. In addition in peace time its functions will include the services required by the Government of India in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, the organisation of naval defence at ports, marine survey in the Indian Ocean and marine transport work for the Government of India. The fleet will consist, in its first stage of development, of the vessels enumerated in paragraph 4 of the report. The inauguration of the Royal Indian Navy will be entrusted to the *personnel* of the existing service, subject to any necessary readjustment of cadres, and Indian gentlemen will be eligible to hold commissioned rank in that service. The changes which this policy involves will be carried out as soon as an agreement has been reached, in consultation with the Admiralty, and with other authorities whose expert advice and assistance will be necessary, on detailed questions of administration, organisation and finance."

I need not emphasise to the Honourable Members of this Chamber the significance of this decision. It embodies an important principle. Thinking men in India have long desired the creation of an Indian Navy for India capable of defending her coasts, her harbours and her commerce. That laudable ambition will now have its scope.

Let me dwell for a moment upon two features in the announcement. To the imagination of those, who understand the traditions of the British Empire, the privilege granted to the Indian Navy of the future to fly the White Ensign should appeal with special significance. India by this privilege is directly admitted at the outset of her naval career to share in the record of the centuries of proud and gallant traditions for which that Ensign stands.

It is a high privilege; it carries with it the great responsibility of rendering service worthy of the honours conferred. Even to embark on the first stage of the performance of those duties, which the greatest Navy in the world has been performing, is no light task. Nevertheless I feel sure that it will be courageously undertaken as a vital part of India's natural ambitions and hope.

To Indians a new and honourable career of national service has been opened. The recommendation of Lord Rawlinson's Committee has been accepted that Indians desiring to qualify for Commissions in the Indian Navy should receive special facilities for suitable education in earlier years and later for technical training in the naval profession. I look to those who elect to set out on this career to use every effort to fit themselves for their task to foster an *esprit de corps* and to found here in India those traditions of high efficiency and courage which the pages of history commemorate as the proud possession of the Navy of Great Britain.

Much constructive work remains to be done before there is a Royal Indian Navy in being. Legislation will be necessary. Ships must be acquired and specially equipped for commission in Indian waters. Details of organisation and finance have to be examined. Careful and thorough preparation will be called for. These processes, which will take some time, are on hand and will be completed with the least possible delay. These are matters of detail, though of great importance to the success of the project, and I do not propose to discuss them to-day; many of them are referred to in the report now published which explains the frame-work of the project. I need only at the moment mention that from the preliminary estimates it appears that the creation of the Indian Navy in its initial stages is not expected to involve any large addition to public expenditure. Of more importance than questions of detail is the acceptance of the policy of the creation for India of a naval service of her own. I am confident that this great opportunity will be welcomed and turned to the best account for the lasting benefit of India.

In my address at the opening of the Session of the Legislative Assembly I referred to the creation of a Rates Advisory Committee and to the important functions with which the Committee would be entrusted in the administration of our railways. It may be of interest to many in this Chamber to know that I have offered the presidency of this Committee to Sir Narasimha Sarma, who was formerly Leader of the Council of State, and that he has agreed to serve in this capacity. I feel sure that his appointment will be welcomed both by his former colleagues in this Chamber and by the public generally.

I was indebted to the late Council of State not only for the work performed on behalf of India in the Chamber itself, but for the eminent services of individual Members of the Chamber on important Committees and Commissions. I feel sure I can rely on the Members of the present Council of State for the same measure of support and help. I note that Sardar Jogendra Singh, who was a Member of this Chamber, in spite of having undertaken the responsible and arduous duties of Minister in the Government of the Punjab, has intimated that he will gladly continue to serve on the Indian Sandhurst Committee; and Mr. Sethna, who is a past and present Member of the Council of State, has undertaken the heavy obligation of proceeding to England and elsewhere for three months as a

[H. E. the Viceroy.]

member of the same Committee in order to study military training institutions. I appreciate this keen desire to perform public service even at personal inconvenience, and I gladly bring to notice these instances of the spirit which animates the Members of this Chamber in their outlook on their responsibilities to the public.

When I last addressed this Chamber I expressed my gratification that the observations made by me in my speech to the Indian Legislature at the opening of the last Session had been correctly understood in this Chamber, and that my desire to see a spirit of more friendly co-operation and goodwill had been appreciated. There were two considerations of importance. In the first place by the evidence of a spirit of this character an earlier appointment of the Statutory Commission might be secured. I understand that this is the aspiration of all in India whose avowed desire is to attain political progress by constitutional means. Not less important is the other consideration that by this spirit alone a better political atmosphere would come into existence and prevail at the time the Commission commenced its inquiry. I brought those considerations to the attention of this Chamber on its dissolution, and I again commend them to the notice of the reconstituted Council of State. Without the existence of conditions in which forms of responsible institutions can develop harmoniously, the results of an inquiry by a Statutory Commission may fall short of expectations. Let us remember the intentions of Parliament as expressed in the Preamble of the Act: "And whereas the action of Parliament must be guided by the co-operation received from those on whom new opportunities of service will be conferred".

It is thus made clear that proof of genuine goodwill in the direction of working the constitution to the best advantage will be regarded by the British Parliament as an important factor for their guidance in determining the course to be pursued in the immediate future. If this view is correct, and I can scarcely conceive the possibility of contradiction, and as the future stages of advance must be decided by the British Parliament, would it not benefit India's political progress to provide plain and unambiguous evidence of this goodwill? I dealt at some length with this aspect of the constitutional question in my recent address to the Assembly. I expressed my regret that the Legislature had not availed itself definitely of the opportunity afforded to it, and that the spirit manifested in the offer by His Majesty's Government had not met with a more ready and complete response. No useful purpose would now be served by repeating the tenour of my observations.

They were intended to help India and were conceived to the best of my judgment in the true interests of Indian political progress. In some quarters they have elicited comment and criticism which seem to indicate a complete misunderstanding both of the purpose I had in view and the spirit that animated me. I feel sure that I run no such risk in this Chamber and that I may look to it with confidence for greater encouragement in my expectations. Once more let me solemnly assert my profound conviction that it is along this avenue that the aims and aspirations of India may the more quickly be attained, and that true prospects of peaceful progress may the more surely be found. I still cherish the hope that India will not tarry in pursuing it.